



## “A Legacy of Service”

A Costa Rican street boy chooses peaceful negotiation instead of violence. A Nicaraguan schoolgirl decides to become a nurse. Neither young person knows that Catherine Strachan Lindenberg '71 has influenced their decisions. Calling herself “only catalyst and promoter,” she has been one of the driving forces behind improving adolescent health and nursing education in Central America.



Raised by missionary parents who served in Central America, Lindenberg learned early the rewards and challenges of a life dedicated to public service. She attended Case Western Reserve University on a full nursing scholarship, and in 1971, she received the first joint MSN-MPH degree from Yale.

Lindenberg attributes her first job after her YSN graduation to the way she was treated at Yale. She believes that the World Health Organization (WHO) hired her at the age of twenty-seven because her Yale professors treated her as a colleague and valued her perspective. At that time she was also one of few master's-prepared bilingual nurses. While at YSN, she says, “I had the unusual opportunity to learn from nursing leaders Virginia Henderson, Donna Diers '64, and Margaret Arnstein.” She worked for WHO for seven years providing nursing consultation in fourteen Latin American countries.

Lindenberg served as Director of Faculty Research and Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston and as Chair of the Division of Women and Children at Emory School of Nursing. After her husband died, Lindenberg decided to return “home” to Costa Rica. Although she is technically retired from the University of Washington School of Nursing, she still teaches family and child nursing to UW nursing students in Costa Rica during the winter quarter each year. The students provide hands-on care in a local hospital, go door to door vaccinating children and checking on the nutrition of the young and the elderly, and provide health care to children in

a day care center that is open twelve hours a day for the poorest of the poor.

When she is not teaching, Lindenberg is “facilitating and promoting,” as she calls it. She uses her business and academic connections developed over many years of living and working in Latin America to bring two unique programs to the area. Her connections come from her family and her career path. Lindenberg explains that she has the privilege of being the granddaughter and daughter of missionaries who started one of the most prestigious hospitals in Costa Rica. She has been associated with WHO, Yale, Case Western Reserve, John Hopkins (where she earned her doctorate in public health), University of Washington, Duke University (through former YSN Dean Catherine Gilliss), and the Central American Management Institute, where her husband was a dean for eight years.

Lindenberg has been working with TeenSmart International (TSI) for about fourteen years and continues to write peer-reviewed publications from the research generated from the program. Using the power and access of the Internet, TSI provides bilingual (English/Spanish) interactive services to at-risk youth in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. A computer lab rigged to the back of large trucks is one example of the many youth development organizational settings where young people on the street can confidentially assess their own risk in the areas of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, sexuality, nutrition, accidents, suicide, and exercise. They are taught to use Stephen Covey's “7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens” to reduce their risks in all areas of their lives. If they feel the need for further help, the program also provides referrals to clinicians who can answer their questions about risk in such areas as sexually transmitted diseases or suicide. This year alone, TSI has already served 2,000 young people in Central America.

Most recently, Lindenberg has been facilitating a campaign to strengthen the nursing profession in Nicaragua. “Proyecto Fortalecimiento de la Enfermería” is a private-public sector partnership between a major Central American bank, the largest Nicaraguan telecommunications company, United States Aid for International Development (USAID), Research Triangle International, Duke University School of Nursing, and Pearson Prentice Hall Health publishers. Twelve nursing computer laboratories have been set up across the country and a series of CD-ROMs has been

developed for this initiative, demonstrating 101 basic nursing skills and procedures, translated from English to Spanish. These CDs and computer labs have been inaugurated at all ten nursing schools in Nicaragua. The program doesn't stop with students—150 nursing faculty have been trained and five nursing scholarships have been funded so that graduates can develop more innovative nursing.

In hopes of attracting a new generation of independent and committed practitioners, public service announcements aimed at improving the image of nursing in Nicaragua have been produced to run on radio and TV over the next three years. The futuristic ads will present nurses as health care providers as well as entrepreneurs capable of autonomous practice. The campaign to strengthen nursing has the support of the leadership in the Nicaraguan government and health care system. Unwilling to credit herself with the development of the project over the past two and a half years, Lindenberg says that she is “the catalyst but not the doer.”

Lindenberg traveled through Central America last fall and used her skills as a listener and facilitator. “I listen to what people need and then I think abundance and mutual benefit. I look for the partner who can ante up and I give them all the credit. I have never experienced anything like this synergy we have going with these projects,” she says. She does not believe that anyone should have a “scarcity mentality.” Synergy creates a new math—“one plus one doesn't make two, it adds up to more like 36!” she says. Treated as an equal at Yale, she treats others as equals and she is never disappointed.

When she was younger, Lindenberg felt like she needed to be the one to perform. Now, in her “decade of retirement,” she sees others as the performers. “I wish we could learn that earlier in our lives,” she adds. She used to spend thirty hours preparing a three-hour class. Now, it's a whole new paradigm. She says, “I know that it's the audience members who have all the answers—I just have to ask the question to get them to think and believe in themselves!”



Setting her compass toward north, Lindenberg's day starts at 6 a.m. with a cup of tea and reading something inspirational, followed by playtime with her three dogs, and a daily walk or tennis match. Her time at the computer is spent on professional endeavors, such as sending reports to USAID about training nursing faculty, preparing articles about the TSI data, or organizing a conference on technology. She characterizes her work simply as capacity building, strengthening institutional endeavors, and dream promoting. And she feels that she can do this kind of work because Yale prepared her to believe in herself. For example, Audrey McCluskey, then YSN's community health nursing chair, allowed Lindenberg to develop her own plans to practice in the Hill neighborhood of New Haven and gave her permission to undertake a pioneering study on the nutritional status of children in rural Nicaragua as the basis for both her YSN thesis and her School of Public Health thesis.

Lindenberg's heritage and legacy have come full circle. Her daughter, an inner-city teacher in San Francisco, just finished a Women's Cooperative service project in northern Costa Rica. Lindenberg's son works with Habitat for Humanity and a bank foundation dedicated to public service in Central America.

And Lindenberg continues to shun the limelight—she says that she only makes things happen because, as she says, “I have the privilege of having access to so much goodness.”